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## Residents eye Superfund site cleanup

**By Michael Wright**

The Facts

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FREEPORT — The Environmental Protection Agency said it is moving forward with plans to possibly clean up a contaminated industrial site in Bridge Harbor, but residents are growing impatient with a process that already has lasted years.

The EPA declared the old Gulfco Marine Maintenance facility a Superfund site in 2003 after two Texas Commission on Environmental Quality studies found contamination in the soil and groundwater at the site.

In July, the EPA ordered the responsible parties, including Sequa Corp.; Dow Chemical, which was a major customer of the barge-cleaning facility; and LDL, which currently owns the site, to come up with a plan to determine exactly how extensive the contamination is and what measures need to be taken.

But residents, some of whom say they have gotten sick from living near the site for years, seemed frustrated at a meeting Thursday with EPA officials.

"I want to know if I'm living on something that's affecting my health and my grandchildren's health when they come to visit me," Kim Wessels said.

The facility operated from 1971 to 1998 under numerous owners and left behind chemicals such as 1,2-dichloroethane, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and metals, according to the TCEQ reports. The exact quantities are still unknown, said Gary Miller, the EPA's remedial project manager for the site.

The next step is for the agency to review the companies' recommendations and either approve them or recommend changes, Miller said.

Miller came into the meeting assuming soil and water sampling would start at the plant and simply follow the contamination from its end, but residents urged him to test their property whether there was a trail or not.

  
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However, canal samples might not be included, Miller said, because even if contaminants are found, it will be difficult to trace them to a single source.

The entire process, from assessment to cleanup, could take another two years, Miller said.

Michael Wright covers environmental issues for The Facts. Contact him at (979) 849-8581.

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